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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 KATHMANDU 003148

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SUBJECT: UN MOVING AHEAD ON CANTONMENT OF MAOIST COMBATANTS

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

Summary

¶1. (C) Key staff of the Office of Personal Representative of the UN Secretary General briefed members of the diplomatic corps and the donor community December 1 on the status of cantonment of Maoist combatants. Ian Martin's security advisor Dan Huntington, political advisor John Norris and military advisor Gen. Jan Erick Wilhelmsen gave an overview of the seven Maoist "People's Liberation Army" "divisional" sites and described how the UN planned to monitor them after the combatants were registered. Norris also provided the Political/Economic Chief with a rough timeline on next steps.

Briefing Embassies and Donors on "Divisional" Sites

¶2. (C) In Ian Martin's absence, key members of his team in the Office of the Personal Representative gave a briefing December 1 for the diplomatic corps, the donor community and others on the status of the cantonment of Maoist combatants. The briefing, which Political/Economic Chief and DATT attended, began with a summary of the seven "People's Liberation Army" (PLA) "divisional" sites. According to Martin's security advisor, Dan Huntington, a long-time Nepal resident who is a former British Army Ghurka officer and British foreign assistance (DFID) employee, Martin's mission is satisfied that the seven divisional sites agreed upon will be workable. The 5th PLA Division site in Rolpa District is the most remote and highest elevation camp, but if the road is improved, even that should be acceptable. He reported that Martin's military advisor Gen. Jan Erick Wilhelmsen, hopes to visit the proposed 21 satellite camp sites the week of December 4 with Government and Maoist teams to finalize those sites. Post has faxed a summary and a map of the divisional sites to SCA/INS. In response to a question, Gen. Wilhelmsen said all the sites were on Government or community land.

How the Camps Will Function

¶3. (C) Huntington noted that the Maoist PLA commanders would manage the camps. Ian Martin's political advisor John Norris

emphasized that this included providing security to the so-called "UN quadrangle" within each of the divisional cantonments where weapons and ammunition would be stored under lock and alarm. It was important to remember that the system depended on voluntary compliance with the terms of the November 28 monitoring agreement, Norris added. The UN Mission was not in a position to compel compliance or provide armed monitors to guard the weapons. That would take thousands of UN peacekeepers, which neither of the parties nor Nepal's neighbors (i.e., India) wanted. Gen. Wilhelmsen maintained that the best way to ensure the successful functioning of the camps was to make use of the existing PLA command and control system, not substitute something new.

Role of the UN

¶4. (C) Norris did say that the UN had three interests that might require it to take a direct role in camp management. First, he noted that if the management of the camps deteriorated to the point where the combatants began to become agitated and unhappy because of problems with food, sanitation, etc., the UN would intervene to try to remedy the problem. Second, the UN had a special interest in the proper functioning of the UN quadrangles inside the divisional-level camps where UN observers would reside. There were certain UN guidelines that would need to be followed in setting up those areas. Third, the UN had a special interest in the security of its unarmed personnel who would be living among these combatants. In terms of personnel, Norris stated that the eventual goal was to have three international staff around the clock at each divisional cantonment (a supervisor, a deputy, a security officer) and four local staff. He also spoke of having 10-15 three-person Joint Monitoring Teams of

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UN, Nepal Army and People's Liberation Army personnel who would rove from site to site and conduct spot inspections. Inside the camps themselves, two-person teams of UN and PLA personnel would inspect. Likewise, under the terms of the November 28 agreement, the two-person teams of UN and Nepal Army would inspect Nepal Army sites.

Registration of Combatants

¶5. (C) Norris also spoke about the UN's responsibility to oversee the process for registration of combatants. As agreed, no one who was born after May 25, 1988 (18 years on the date of the signing of the GON-Maoist Cease-fire Code of Conduct on May 25, 2006) would be registered. Minors would be turned over, he said, to UNICEF and arrangements made to return them to their families. Before registering others, the UN would ask a series of probing questions to determine whether those applying were in fact actual PLA combatants. They would also have to present a PLA identity card. While the Maoists continued to use the 35,000 number when discussing their combatants, Norris did not expect there to be anywhere near that number. One difficulty in setting up a proper registration process was that the combatants were already crowding at the sites, but that difficulty could be overcome. Wilhelmsen also said the PLA would be registering as units, not individuals, and would required to present PLA ID cards.

Role of the Government

¶6. (C) Martin's political advisor explained that the Maoists had agreed in all of the peace documents that the Government of Nepal would be responsible for supporting the camps in terms of infrastructure. On top of the Nepal Rupees 175 million (USD 2.45 million), the Government had already provided directly to the Maoist leadership, the GON was also responsible for providing electricity, water, telecommunication and other services to the sites in order to

make them habitable over the long term. The Government was in the process of setting up these services, but Norris complained that they were not always coordinating with the Maoists. According to Norris, the Peace Secretariat (which is in the Office of the Prime Minister) and the Home Ministry had the joint lead on the camps.

Role of the International Community

¶ 7. (C) Norris stressed that it was very important for the donor community to be aware of some key issues as they considered aid programs. First, it was crucial to note that the Maoists did not consider themselves a defeated army, and would not accept having the usual demobilization, demilitarization and reintegration program thrust upon them. That was one reason the Maoists had insisted on the one-key approach. The Maoists also had clear ideas about when foreign assistance was appropriate. They did not want to be perceived as charity cases. It would be a mistake, Norris maintained, for donors to look at the PLA camps as similar to refugee camps or internally displaced person camps. They were not; they were army camps. The Maoists would probably want some international assistance, but it would have to be handled carefully and channeled through the UN for prior approval.

Cantonment Not the Only Issue: Election Key

¶ 8. (C) Martin's political advisor stressed that cantonment was just one of a range of peace process issues and, in his view, perhaps not even the most important one. It was important to keep an eye on the longer term goal which was that Nepal hold free and fair Constituent Assembly elections in June 2007. He voiced concern that donors would rush to assist cantonments and neglect other important issues, such as human rights and election monitoring. Norris said that the UN hoped that the GON and the Maoists would soon set up a small working group to handle the nitty-gritty of

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cantonments. The UN also planned to set one up with a few members from the UN and the donors which could help coordinate assistance to the camps.

Timeline

¶ 9. (C) Norris told the Political/Economic Chief after the meeting that he expected the UN Security Council to issue a Presidential Statement on Nepal on December 4. (Note: It was issued on the 1st.) Ian Martin would return from New York on the 4th or the 5th. UN lawyers were currently reviewing the November 28 Agreement and if they approved it, which he anticipated, Ian Martin would then sign that agreement. Norris thought that the technical assessment mission might arrive as soon as December 7 or 8. He suspected that international monitors -- he mentioned Norwegians and Swiss -- could be on the ground in Nepal as soon as the week of December 11.

Getting Monitors to the Sites

¶ 10. (C) Norris predicted that the UN Mission's preferred course of having monitors go immediately to the divisional sites (after a few days of orientation in the capital) versus remaining in Kathmandu would prevail. The UN Mission would probably fudge the issue by having the monitors stay in quarters near the camp sites. Because it would take weeks to get the Mission up to its full strength, he also indicated that the UN Mission would draw in the meantime on existing UN personnel in country in other UN organizations such as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN Development Program to staff the initial work related to

cantonments and possibly even the registering of combatants.

Comment

¶11. (C) The United Nations Mission here appears to be doing its best to move forward as rapidly as possible in nailing down the details of how the cantonment process will work. Part of the UN team's difficulty, which both the Government and Maoists face, is that the same small group of people are involved in all of the key peace process negotiations and decisions. The current negotiations concern the Interim Constitution. Norris told the Pol/Econ Chief December 1 that the UN had failed to persuade the Government of Nepal and the Maoists to create separate working groups for the various open issues. Instead, it is the same cast of increasingly tired officials who gather each time. We are still seeing complaints that villagers in the immediate vicinity of the planned PLA camps are being compelled to feed and house the Maoist combatants because the camps are not yet constructed. That said, a positive result of the PLA collecting at their sites appears to be greater public confidence in the peace process. We hope that this trend toward a reduction in fear continues and intensifies.

MORIARTY